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Parental Deportation Effects On Citizen Children

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Author's Note

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### Abstract

In this paper I will be discussing how Hispanic children are affected by their parents documented status, deportation, and how it can affect them physically and mentally. Studies have shown that children who live in a household where at least one of their parents is undocumented don't do well in school and are even less likely to graduate from high school (Luis H. Zayas, Lauren E. Gulbas). These children don't feel secure because of raids that occur and laws that are passed that make it really hard for undocumented people to have a stable life which also affects them economically putting them in poverty (Sandy P. Rubio-Hernandez, Cecilia Ayon). This paper highlights the impact anti-immigration policies have on Latina/o's children. Drawing on peer review journal articles and scholarly sources, this paper points to the trauma experienced by Latina/o children whose parents or legal guardians have been deported and what schools and communities where deportations have taken place can do to diminish the negative impact of these anti-immigration actions.

*Keywords:* Social emotional effects, Parental Documentation status, Mixed-status families, mental health issues

**Introduction**

Imagine getting ready to go to school. It consists of the everyday routine getting ready, eating breakfast and out the door. Now picture coming back from school as you throw your backpack on the floor and yell for your mom. Only to not hear a response and find your dad freaking out, scared, and broken. He finally makes out the words, “Mijo/a deportaron a tu mama” (Son, daughter they deported your mom). How do you go on with the rest of your day or life with that news? Sadly this is the harsh reality for many U.S Citizen born children who are raised in mix-status households. They have to live their day to day life in constant fear of “will my parents be there when I get home?”, or “hopefully everything is working good on the car so they don’t get stopped” it can be the smallest things that will get them arrested and deported.

In this paper I will be discussing the effects of deportation on citizen children, I will write about school, home, community, and mental health outcomes such as PTSD, depression, and anxiety in hopes that it will bring more awareness to these children being left behind. There is even some cases where these children go through an identity crisis where they feel like they don’t belong in the U.S, Mexico, or Central America. More needs to be done for these families, and some policies need to be changed.

**Health Effects**

“Children of immigrants represent 25% of the 69.9 million children in the United States”(Liseth Rojas-Flores, Mari L. Clements, & J. Hwang Koo, P.g. 352). That’s a quarter of the total U.S children population and out of those children “over 88% of immigrant-origin children (4.5 million) are U.S-born with a foreign parent” (Liseth Rojas-Flores, Mari L. Clements, & J. Hwang Koo, P.g. 352).” Knowing that about 88% of the 25% total U.S children population are born into a family where at least one of their parents is undocumented is heartbreaking because it

makes one wonder how many of these kid have already faced or will face parental deportation? “In just over 2 years (July 2010 to September 2012), nearly 250,000 parents of citizen children were deported”(Liseth Rojas-Flores, Mari L. Clements, & J. Hwang Koo, P.g. 352). This was data from 6 years ago but it is still very high numbers being represented.

Whether these children really suffer from mental health issues is an ongoing debate because studies that are conducted don't focus on other outliers that can add on to a child feeling a certain way. But, there was a study conducted on 91 Latino U.S born children from ages 6 through 12, living in mixed-status families with at least one undocumented parent at risk of deportation or detention (Liseth Rojas-Flores, Mari L. Clements, & J. Hwang Koo, 2016). These studies were conducted in multiple ways to try and get rid of any lingering outliers that can mess with the data being collected. They used multi-agents such as the teachers, children, clinical help and parent views to see what each one of them had to say and how they could compare and contrast the data.

From the data collected they saw that children that came from a family where a parent was detained or deported were rated higher with internalizing problems, negative moods, and they were more emotional compared to children with legal permanent resident parents, and parents who had no contact with ICE (Liseth Rojas-Flores, Mari L. Clements, & J. Hwang Koo, 2016). This shows that parents legal status does take a toll in their child's life, but the ones that are most affected by it are those whose parents have actually gone through the deportation or detention process. “These findings are consistent with the findings of prior empirical research in showing significantly increased rates of depression and anxiety pose immediate developing challenges to child functioning and pose higher risk for future mental health problems” (Liseth Rojas-Flores, Mari L. Clements, & J. Hwang Koo, P.g. 359).

**Economical/Home Effects**

Even though these children may have papers its as if they didn't have them either because they're in constant fear that their family will be split. In Arizona since its a state next to the border it has stricter laws than other states when it comes to workers. They passed the Legal Arizona Workers Act in 2008, and in 2010 they also passed the SB 1070 which meant that the law enforcement could go and stop anyone "suspicious" looking and they could ask for legal documentations (Sandy P. Rubio-Hernandez, Cecilia Ayon, 2015). Arizona is one of the toughest states to live in if you're undocumented or someone of color these laws place these families at an economical disadvantage making it harder to find jobs.

These laws are not only hurting the parents and making them stress over how they're going to bring money into the house but the children grow up seeing this and they stress too. Sometimes leading them to drop out of school in search for a job to help their parents out. "More than 6 million Latino children live in poverty of which two thirds are children of immigrants" (Sandy P. Rubio-Hernandez, Cecilia Ayon, P.g. 21). Since undocumented people are only limited to a very small amount of jobs they mostly have to do hard labor or field work meaning they're working long hours and 6 to 7 days a week.

"Parents needed to work more hours in order to meet the needs of their families which led to parents spending less quality time with their children" (Sandy P. Rubio-Hernandez, Cecilia Ayon, 2015). Parents over working then starts to affect their parenting practices, which in the long run will impact the outcomes of the children. "Unauthorized status may result in higher parental stress, higher economical pressure, and lower child supervision, which may lesson the potentially protective role of family" (Kalina M. Brabeck, Erin Sibley pg.1157). Sometime that is why children start misbehaving or lose interest in school because they feel like they don't have

that support when in reality their parents are working hard to pull the family forward. The parents at that point chose work over their children, but it's not really in option for them because they're trying to make sure their children have a roof over their head and food in their stomachs.

### **Education**

Depending where these families live they can face different types of situations with in school. For example if they live in Arizona where they're tougher on immigration laws school can be seen as another hurdle these children need to get over. "The enforcement of English only educations rejects the second most widely used language in the nation, Spanish, and may be considered a form of microaggressions in public education" (Sandy P. Rubio-Hernandez, Cecilia Ayon, P.g. 21). This can lead the Latino children to feel as if they're not wanted or supported, and who would want to go to a school where they feel they're being discriminated? No child deserves to be going through that. "Research has also highlighted cognitive benefits of multilingualism, such as higher levels of executive functioning, including attentional control and cognitive flexibility" (Sibley, Erin, Brabeck, Kalina, P.g.139). So instead of forcing English only on these children these schools should do more for dual language speakers since it will be benefiting them in the end.

More schools should adapt to sending Spanish and English homework home because that would make the parents get involved more and help their children succeed. In the city I was born and raised in there was a high population of Latino/a's so all the schools send Spanish and English papers/ homework home, but even then not a lot of Latino/as know how to read. I worked at a daycare in Othello Washington and there was kids who always asked me to help with their homework because their parents didn't understand what was going on. We have to

keep in mind that many of the first generation parents don't go far in education so more teachers need to be aware of this to be able to help the Latino children within their schools.

### **Exclusion/Double Identity**

According to Luis H. Zayas and Lauren E. Gulbas among the children "left behind" in the U.S. after a parent's detention or deportation, over sixty percent of the younger cohort felt a sense of exclusion, and even those whose parents haven't undergone either one of the above felt excluded do to the fact that their parents are undocumented.

Sometimes these children go through depression, anxiety, and constantly walk with fear knowing that their parents can be taken away at any given moment. They do not feel safe at all even though they may be citizens because living in a mixed-status family means they can be separated at any given moment. Some children even go to school and wonder if their parents will be home once they're back. One of the articles I read mentioned the family stress model and I thought that was a useful example.

What the family stress model means is that the stress may start off with the parents which then affects the children as I had mentioned before. This can be from not finding a job or having to over work in the fields to make ends meet. Mixed-status families are more likely to live in a family that has lower social support live in crowded housing, and experiences less access to social services, including childcare, preschool, and health insurance (Kalina M. Brabeck, Erin Sibley, p.1156). This can all affect the health of the children in more severe ways because if a parent then gets deported and the child has no health insurance it will cost a lot of money to be getting them a therapist for their depression.

In one of the articles I read there was this boy name Juan who was 10 years old when his father was deported back to Mexico. His mom brother and him would live in Mexico for 6



months to be with his dad, but then come back to the U.S for 6 months. There was a statement he had said that I feel can relate with many of these children going through parental deportation, he said “ “I don’t think my opinion would help anyone I’m just a kid.” “I have family there (U.S.), and I have family here (Mexico), on both sides. I’m like in between Mexico and the United States. It’s like I’m between two worlds” (Luis H. Zayas, Lauren E. Gulbas, Pg.2471). Many of these children are suffering by not knowing where exactly their place in this world is at the end of the day they just want to belong like everyone else.

### **Conclusion**

More needs to be done for these children who get left behind. Starting with health care being provided to them for the traumatic experiences they face. These indicators point to a need of increased mental health services along with other helpful support systems these children can seek help from. If these children are not cared for then it will continue to negatively affect them and it will affect the U.S as well because these children are apart of the society as well.

Laws and policies need to be changed as well in order for these families to stay together and not get broken up. It is not only affect the parents but the children around them. These children deserve a chance at a happy life like any other American because at the end of the day they’re U.S born as well.

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